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RR RUEHDBU RUEHIK RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHSK RUEHSL RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHMO #2055/01 2231339
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111339Z AUG 09 ZDK CTG NUMEROUS SVCS
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4494
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002055

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MD](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIA GETS USED TO THE IDEA OF A NON-COMMUNIST MOLDOVA

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Moscow is coming to terms with the Moldova election outcome, and has reached out via its ambassador to liberal party leaders. Experts, who describe the elections as a "peaceful example of post-Soviet countries' forging new political identities," assume Russia will cooperate with the new government in Moldova as long as it does not attempt to lead Moldova into NATO. The Duma's International Affairs Committee head Kosachev assured Transnistrian leader Smirnov that Russia would not treat Transnistria as a bargaining chip, while DFM Karasin discussed post-election Transnistria settlement prospects with Transnistrian "FM" Yastrebnchak. End Summary.

Russian views of the post-election situation

¶2. (SBU) Russia is coming to terms with the fact that Moldova for the first time since 2001 will not be governed by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM), the party the GOR had unofficially supported in the April 5 and July 29 elections in that country.

¶3. (SBU) Some experts believe Moscow became disillusioned with Moldovan President Voronin after the Communists' inability, despite Russian support, to win the April 5 elections. Adjusting to the new realities in Moldova after the July 29 repeat elections, Nezavisimaya Gazeta said Russia signaled it would work with all parties in the new Moldovan Government when Russian Ambassador to Moldova Valery Kuzmin met August 6 with Liberal Party of Moldova leaders Dorin Chirtoaca and Michael Gimpu. The newspaper described the meeting as "the first time in the history of Russian-Moldovan relations" that the GOR spoke with a Moldovan "non-majority" party. In return, Nezavisimaya Gazeta argued that the Russian-speaking population in Moldova and Moldovan guest workers in Russia, along with Russia's energy resources, demand for imports from Moldova, and role in the Transnistria conflict forced the Moldovan election winners to engage with Russia.

¶4. (SBU) Alexei Vlasov from Moscow State University suggested Moscow had originally supported Voronin in order to maintain stability in Moldova. Noting Voronin's pro-Russian policies, he thought Moscow would not view a liberal coalition "too negatively," if it somehow included the Communists. Moscow Carnegie Center's Sam Greene thought Moscow would only have "limited goodwill" for the liberals' plans for a more pro-Western Moldova, saying Moscow's goodwill would end if the new government attempted to lead Moldova into NATO.

¶5. (SBU) Sergei Markedonov from the Institute for Political and Military Analysis called it premature to consider the era of the PCRM to have come to an end. The poverty in Moldova coupled with the social cost of aligning the country with the EU, as well as the prospect of continued corruption would conspire to keep the PCRM's hopes for future government responsibility alive. In addition,

Markedonov saw instability due internal divisions between the coalition partners as bolstering the PCRM's position.

¶6. (SBU) Markedonov went on to tie the election results in Moldova to a "weakened integration capacity" of the former Soviet Union space and the "crisis of integrating ideology" (Soviet communism). He suggested the defeat of the PCRM was a peaceful example of post-Soviet countries' forging new political identities.

Russian continues to support Transnistria resolution

¶7. (SBU) The outcome of the elections will not affect Russia's involvement in solving Transnistria. Russian DFM Grigoriy Karasin met Transnistrian "FM" Vladimir Yastrebchak July 31 to discuss prospects for resolving the Transnistria conflict in light of the election outcome. The discussions included Russia's cooperation with the region on socioeconomic, humanitarian, and economic issues.

Head of the Duma International Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev told Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov July 16 that Transnistria would never be a "bargaining chip" for Russia, and that Russia would make sure the Moldova-Transnistria dialogue would not stop.

¶8. (SBU) While Carnegie's Greene posited that the election result might make Russia more constructive in resolving the Transnistria conflict, Russian website politcom.ru picked up Transnistrian "Proryv" leader Dmitriy Soin's opinion that the "communist paradise" in Moldova had come to an end, placing Russia at a crossroads. He posited that Russia lost its dream of a pro-Russian Moldova, and was now left only with a pro-Russian Transnistria, unless Moscow persisted in "dreaming of Moldova returning to the fold."

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Comment

¶9. (SBU) Despite its support for Voronin before the elections, Russia has little choice but to work with whichever new government forms in Moldova. This will also extend to Russia's intentions for resolving the Transnistrian conflict, however sincere they may be.

RUBIN